



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 83720
BOISE, IDAHO 83720-0027

TOM LUNA
STATE SUPERINTENDENT
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Idaho State Department of Education

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www.sde.idaho.gov

Media contact:

Melissa McGrath

(208) 332-6818

mrmcgrath@sde.idaho.gov

IDAHO SCHOOLS, STUDENTS REACH HIGHER ACADEMIC GOALS

BOISE – While the state has continued to raise the bar, more than 60 percent of Idaho schools are still reaching the state's high academic goals – some for the first time ever, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna announced today.

“Since 2007, we have worked to raise the bar in Idaho's public education system, and our students have risen to meet these challenges every year with the help of our talented teachers and dedicated parents,” Superintendent Luna said. “I am proud of the great progress we have made in raising student achievement over the past three years. While we celebrate our successes today, I recognize we still have a long way to go.”

Superintendent Luna announced the statewide Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results this afternoon at Caldwell High School, which made AYP for the first time ever this year. The entire district has made significant strides in raising student achievement over the past three years. In 2007, none of Caldwell's 10 schools made AYP. Now, eight schools in Caldwell are making AYP, including the high school and Canyon Springs Alternative High School.

Several other schools statewide also made AYP for the first time this year, including Twin Falls High School in Twin Falls and Farmin Stidwell Elementary School in Sandpoint.

Since 2007, we have made significant gains in student achievement. In 2007, 26 percent of our schools met AYP. Two years later, that number increased to 66 percent. This year, we raised the bar, making it more difficult to meet AYP, and still, 62 percent of our schools reached this higher goal.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Idaho is required to calculate and report the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of every public school, based on results of the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). The ISAT is the statewide standardized test that measures student performance in reading, mathematics and language usage in grades 3-8 and 10. Students also take the Science ISAT in grades 5, 7 and 10, but those scores are not counted toward AYP.

To make AYP, a school must meet the student achievement goals set by the Idaho State Board of Education in 41 different target areas during a given school year. The 41 targets include students in the entire school, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency and students who are economically disadvantaged.

The student achievement goals were increased in the 2009-2010 school year. To make AYP this year, 85.6 percent of students in a school had to reach grade-level proficiency in reading, compared to 78 percent last year. In math, 83 percent of students in a school had to reach grade-level proficiency this year, compared to 70 percent last year.

AYP results for each school and district will be available online this afternoon at www.sde.idaho.gov.



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SUCCESS STORIES IN IDAHO

The following are a few examples of the many success stories we have seen across Idaho this year:

Caldwell High School and the Caldwell School District:

The Caldwell School District has much to celebrate this year. In 2007, none of Caldwell's 10 schools made AYP. Now, eight of Caldwell's schools are making AYP. Caldwell High School made AYP for the first time ever this year. Caldwell Superintendent Roger Quarles attributes the district's success to recruiting, hiring and retaining the very best teachers with the intent of increasing student achievement. Focus in the classroom is on the individual needs of each student. Each of Caldwell's 10 schools has an instruction coach who assists each teacher and their needs to be successful. Quarles also credits tremendous community support as members of the Caldwell community have donated their time and money and supported 50 years of supplemental levies.

Twin Falls High School in the Twin Falls School District:

Twin Falls High School made AYP for the first time this year. Dr. Wiley J. Dobbs, Twin Falls Superintendent, attributed the success to the dedication and hard work on the part of school leaders, teachers, parents and students. "Teachers, administrators and parents have worked diligently on the TFHS Building Leadership Team to develop strategies that helped to lead to their success." TFHS teaches students a rigorous academic curriculum that has been strengthened by their implementation of the *High Schools That Work* model, a school improvement model that focuses on increased student achievement and creating an environment that motivates students to succeed. TFHS also implemented an advisory program, which helps to build a positive community within the school and promote a personalized learning environment for each student. Advisors take an active role in the students' academic progress and their college/career readiness.

Fort Hall Elementary School in the Blackfoot School District:

The Blackfoot School District has made great strides in student achievement over the past three years. Adding to its success, Fort Hall Elementary School made AYP this year for the first time in four years. Scott Crane, superintendent of the Blackfoot School District, attributes their schools' success to efforts district-wide efforts to improve student achievement. For example, the district created Professional Learning Communities at every school and gave teachers the time they need to collaborate and use standards, data, and best teaching practices to meet individual student needs. At Fort Hall Elementary, the district created additional supports. They developed an academic advisory task force consisting of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, District Federal Programs, Special Education, Curriculum and Indian Education Directors. The district hired a consulting teacher to further support Fort Hall Elementary teachers as they worked to raise student achievement. "I contribute the success at Fort Hall Elementary to the district-wide implementation of research-based programs, a determined academic advisory task force and a hard working school staff," said Crane.

Farmin Stidwell Elementary School in the Lake Pend Oreille School District:

Farmin Stidwell Elementary School in Sandpoint made AYP for the first time this year. As the largest elementary school in the Lake Pend Oreille School District with 630 students, it has been a struggle to move all sub-groups to meet proficiency, despite relatively strong overall school ISAT scores. The school and district attribute Farmin Stidwell's success this year to an ongoing after-school tutoring program taught by classroom teachers, more focused attention on specific student needs through the RTI process, curriculum taught with fidelity, and improved scheduling for students most in need of academic interventions. Teachers and staff at Farmin Stidwell are also responding more effectively to student data and ongoing assessments.